



Missing Children of India

Issues and Approaches
A CHILDLINE perspective

By
CHILDLINE India Foundation
Mumbai
Nov 2007

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Written & Compiled: Shikha Aleya

Content Inputs : Kajol Menon, Preeti Bhat, Inu Stephen,
Nicole Menezes, Carlyle Pereira, Sandeep Mitra,
Ashish Damle, Abhishek Lakhtakia, Denis Joseph,
Nishit Kumar.

Field Inputs : CHILDLINE partners
Mr. Sanat Sinha, Sr. Maria Kamalam

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CHILDLINE India Foundation, (CIF),
2nd Floor, Nana Chowk Municipal School,
Frere Bridge Low Level, Nana Chowk,
Mumbai 400 007

Tel: (91 022) 23881098, 23841098

Fax: (91 022) 23811098

E-mail: dial1098@childlineindia.org.in

Website: www.childlineindia.org.in



Towards a new dawn

“CHILDLINE is a nation-wide phone outreach emergency helpline for children in need of care and protection. Project supported by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development and linking State Government, NGOs, Bilateral /Multilateral Agencies and corporate sector.”

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Foreword

Two years ago, CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF) coordinated a short independent study on 'missing children'. The study was based on calls we received in thirty urban cities where CHILDLINE, a 24-hour national emergency phone helpline for children in distress, is in operation. The resulting publication was a situation analysis and recommendations since we had first-hand, ground realities experience with missing children.

The facts and figures have changed since then, but the problem of missing children continues to grow, feeding into the weaknesses of our child protection systems. The recent Nithari case has underlined some of the gruesome possibilities that are a consequence of ignoring the issue. News reports addressing multiple angles of the case have forced many questions into the realm of public awareness. A leading daily undertook a sustained series of reports around the country and presented what is visible of the situation. Such a spotlight plays a critical role in raising consciousness levels, but also indicates that there is far more that is invisible and unknown.

Media and civil society are actively discussing the role of politics, administration, economics, social structures, development priorities and legal systems. All of these come into play not only in the matter of the Nithari serial killing of children, but in the larger field of child rights and the problem of missing children.

Be it activists, NGO organizations, media, civil society or government and administration, all stakeholders in the child rights field need to meet on a common platform to analyze available facts and work on solution strategies.

At the very simplest level, we cannot arrive at overall statistics such as 'how many go missing', and 'how many are recovered' because most cases do not close the loop between registering (when registering does happen which is often not) and closing a case. Often when a child is found and returns to the family, this information is not passed on to the authorities or organizations that may have been originally informed about the missing child.

Just as the responsibility to close the information loop at the point of the child who 'returns' or is 'found' rests with the child's family, the responsibility to monitor case files for current status rests with the administrative bodies dealing with missing children.

The fact that a system and a strict implementation of that system around missing children simply does not exist, is a big part of the reason for such a problem. Recommendations abound. Efforts are springing up but practical approaches and strategies need to be sustained to achieve any measure of success.

Primary statistical data and documentation available with CHILDLINE for the three year period, 2003 to 2006, has been the basis of much of the analysis and discussion that has provided inputs for 'CHILDLINE Perspectives'.

The process of gaining perspective has involved studying available information within and outside of CIF, sharing and analyzing field experiences and a series of intensive discussions by a CIF focus group. The aim of this group has been to conceptualize a possible national level Initiative to tackle the missing children situation. Working on the assumption that no single organization or administrative body can, or should, attempt to own such an Initiative, the process of designing a Missing Children Initiative became a critical guiding factor to the evolution of this publication.

We believe that a first step is the design and operation of a nodal agency, defining and monitoring a Missing Children Initiative with a number of agencies networked together. Primarily, these are the police and their tracking network, Central and State government ministries, the rail and road transport systems, NGO's working in diverse fields (such as rights, gender, trafficking, labour, education, disability and legal systems), shelter homes, media and IT.

Consequent to our experiences with and analysis of the missing children situation, this publication is part of the evolution of a critical Initiative. We aim to strengthen the existing child rights systems and provide intervention by working with government

and non-government agencies, creating collaborations and partnerships and raising the awareness and participation of civil society.

No single entity can tackle this situation alone. As a society we need to protect our children and this is the most important challenge facing us right now.



Kajol Menon
Executive Director
CHILDLINE India Foundation
Mumbai
May 2007



2004 - Round trip: Kolkatta via Delhi to Alwar and back in one year. This was the journey of a kidnapped girl who escaped her year long sexual abuse and arrived at a CHILDLINE office. She was repatriated and her abuser was arrested and sentenced to a seven year jail term.

2005 - Disabled and abandoned: No takers for this four year old blind, dumb and mentally challenged boy found by Melmaruvathur police. Chennai CHILDLINE knocked on the doors of the State Special Commission and the District Rehabilitation Office before managing to finally place the boy in a shelter through the Juvenile Home for boys.

2006 - Nithari: 38 missing children. 17 of these children are now known to have been killed. Pornography, abuse and psychopathic serial killers explode into the consciousness of all of us.

66000 calls regarding missing children received by CHILDLINE centres across the country from 2004 to 2007

Missing Children – An Overview

How many missing children are reported missing across the country each year? How many of those reported missing, are recovered and return to their parents and guardians? How many children actually go missing every year, versus the number reported? Where do they go?

These and related questions are very difficult to address as there is no national database or uniform tracking procedure existing in India today that deals with missing children across the country.

A dipstick survey of studies on diverse child rights issues, such as child labor or trafficking, and news reports post the Nithari-case* yield some figures for missing children. The consensus seems to be that these existing figures are questionable and cannot be treated as accurate indicators of reality.

“On an average, over 40, 000 children in India are reported missing every year, of which approximately 11,000 remain untraced. Where do they go?” (Haq: Report on Child Rights, New Delhi 2005)

A compilation of some of the diverse statistics related to missing children is both overwhelming as well as dissatisfying. The figures quoted from various sources are primarily indicative of the fact that there are large gaps in available information giving us a fragmented picture.

“there are 9,000 children who have gone missing from the national capital in the last three years. Over 2,500 children have been reported missing in 2006 itself, according to figures available with the missing persons squad of Delhi Police” ... “As of Nov 15 this year, 6,289 children were reported missing in the city but we have traced 3,741 children”... “Asked if they kept records of traced children, the authorities replied in the negative”
(http://www.indianmuslims.info/news/2006/november/27/india_news/9_000_delhi_kids_missing_in_last_three_years.html)

“Pune police wake up to missing children” ... “Of the 1,176 children who went missing in 2006, 212 boys and 241 girls are yet to return home”

(<http://cities.expressindia.com/fullstory.php?newsid=216829>)

“Uttar Pradesh recorded 3,641 missing kids in 2006” ... “While 712 of these children were still untraced, cops had recovered the bodies of 83 kids, mostly believed to have been killed” ...

“According to official records, Meerut recorded 848 missing children, followed by Kanpur (806), Lucknow (767), Varanasi (510), Bareilly (285), Gorakhpur (282), Allahabad (143). It is also reported that 16 children were missing from different railway stations in the state” ... “Of the missing children, 2,751 were boys and 898 girls, mostly in the 10-18 years age group. While 488 belonged to 5-10 years, only 145 were under five years”

(http://www.indianmuslims.info/news/2007/february/08/india_news/uttar_pradesh_recorded_3_641_missing_kids_in_2006.html)

“According to a website on missing persons managed by Bengal police and the National Informatics Centre, around 3,700 people went missing in 2004 and 2005 put together. The number was over 5,600 last year”

(<http://www.telegraphindia.com/1070228/asp/bengal/story7451704.asp>)

¹It is difficult to interpret statistics effectively, without uniform parameters, or compiling All-India data. Currently, figures don't tally when State-wise statistics are added up against the All-India approximate. In fact, as per the NHRC report, going by reported statistics, the total number of missing children possibly adds up to more than 50,000 a year on an average. This is based on only those cases that are reported and recorded.

The number of children reported missing from the states/Union Territories mentioned in Table 1, minus those states/Union Territories with nil reporting, comes to an aggregate of 2,66,847, making an average of 44,476 children missing every year. The average reporting for a period of six years varies from state to

*1 Source for this section:
Action Research on Trafficking in Women and Children in India, 2002-2003, NHRC*

state, with certain states having abnormally high figures. For example, the average number of children reported missing in one year in Maharashtra is 13,881, in Delhi, 6227, in Madhya Pradesh, 4,915, in Tamil Nadu, 4,618, in Karnataka, 3,660, in Andhra Pradesh, 2,007 and in Gujarat, 1,624. There is an increasing trend in the annual reporting of missing children in almost all the states.

Table 1: Total number of children reported missing in India

State/Union Territories	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total of 6 years	Yearly average over 1996	2001
A&N Islands	47	42	85	76	83	95	428	71	102%
Andhra Pradesh	1642	2048	1936	2054	2011	2353	12044	2007	43%
Arunachal Pradesh	36	26	23	86	95	112	378	63	211%
Assam	576	585	612	850	1030	1055	4708	785	83%
Chandigarh	24	27	27	33	34	32	177	30	33%
Chhattisgarh	156	175	137	183	170	165	986	164	6%
Delhi	6193	6525	6474	5793	6223	6151	37359	6227	-1%
Goa	215	245	220	195	237	202	1314	219	-6%
Gujarat	1333	1413	1673	1948	1737	1639	9743	1624	23%
Haryana	188	166	225	283	325	318	1505	251	69%
Himachal Pradesh	181	157	153	145	142	154	932	155	-15%
Karnataka	3943	3861	3574	3533	3530	3523	21964	3661	-11%
Kerala	762	884	795	616	629	554	4240	707	-27%
Madhya Pradesh	4280	4739	4823	5378	5354	4914	29488	4915	15%
Maharashtra	14470	13988	12797	14045	13875	14108	83283	13881	-3%
Manipur	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0.5	0%
Meghalaya	14	10	15	13	19	15	86	14	7%
Nagaland	4	3	5	5	4	8	29	5	100%
Orissa	572	445	379	503	360	696	2955	493	22%
Pondicherry	7	0	0	1	2	35	45	8	400%
Rajasthan	1894	1972	1918	1966	2001	2032	11783	1964	7%
Tamil Nadu	2511	4553	4596	4943	5606	5498	27707	4618	119%
Tripura	39	37	33	44	78	37	268	45	-5%
Uttaranchal	313	339	321	286	305	281	1845	308	-10%
Uttar Pradesh	1595	1694	1791	1942	1612	1988	10622	1770	25%
West Bengal	415	679	624	453	405	379	2955	493	-9%
Total	41410	44613	43236	45374	45867	46347	266847	44475	12%

Source: Data collected from the State Police agencies.

The percentage difference of the number of children reported missing in 2001 over the corresponding number of 1996 also shows increase in most of the states/Union Territories, with abnormally high rates of increase in Andaman & Nicobar Islands (102 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (43 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (211 per cent), Assam (83 per cent), Chandigarh (33 per cent), Gujarat (23 per cent), Kerala (27 per cent), Nagaland (100 per cent), Pondicherry (400 per cent), Tamil Nadu (119 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (25 per cent).

Total number of untraced children

Table 2 presents data on the number of children who were reported missing, but were neither rescued nor returned and, therefore, continue to remain missing and untraced. The data in Table 2 is, no doubt, alarming and distressing. Over the period of six years, almost all the states/Union Territories have shown an increasing trend in the number of untraced children. Barring Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Pondicherry which have almost nil reporting, the data from the other states/Union Territories presents a total number of 66,024 children, who continue to remain missing during the six-year period, making an annual average of 11,008 children. It is bewildering to note that in India, on an average, over 44,000 children go missing every year and that out of these, nearly 11,000 children remain untraced. Where these children have disappeared is a question that requires serious thinking.

In several states, this percentage of increase is very high, for e.g., 100 in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, 883 in Arunachal Pradesh, 78 in Andhra Pradesh, 151 in Assam, 83 in Chhattisgarh, 80 in Gujarat, 142 in Haryana, 194 in Tamil Nadu and 300 in Tripura.

Table 2: Percentage of children who continue to remain untraced in proportion to the number of children reported missing

States/Uts	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
A&N Islands	2	5	1	5	8	12
Andhra Pradesh	15	51	18	19	19	22
Arunachal Pradesh	17	8	9	23	61	53
Assam	36	37	44	47	47	49
Chandigarh	38	33	48	36	26	44
Chhattisgarh	15	3	22	17	18	27
Delhi	62	65	73	76	62	43
Goa	25	17	14	18	20	19
Gujarat	10	10	12	11	13	1
Haryana	34	46	48	45	37	49
Himachal Pradesh	22	33	31	30	23	34
Karnataka	10	11	12	12	14	14
Kerala	25	18	32	2	24	29
Madhya Pradesh	26	16	17	11	19	17
Maharashtra	16	16	19	17	17	17
Manipur	0	0	0	0	0	33
Meghalaya	14	10	7	8	21	7
Orissa	73	84	79	83	78	78
Pondicherry	0	0	0	0	0	6
Rajasthan	8	10	10	10	11	14
Tamil Nadu	7	7	17	15	8	10
Tripura	5	0	6	27	45	22
Uttaranchal	19	10	10	9	10	16
Uttar Pradesh	42	31	37	34	34	39
West Bengal	63	61	16	63	53	56

Table 3 : Children Reported missing from the metropolitan cities

Cities	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total of 6 years	Yearly average	2001 over 1996
Delhi	6193	6525	6474	5793	6223	6151	37359	6227	-1
Mumbai	4959	4489	3235	4226	4070	4112	25091	4182	-17
Hyderabad	713	837	805	837	762	878	4832	805	23
Kolkata	NA	1027	1057	995	2519	2397	7995	1599	133
Bangalore	1884	1877	1846	1753	1734	1824	10918	1820	-3
Chennai	956	961	1040	1117	1077	1093	6244	1041	14
Total	14705	15716	14457	14721	16385	16455	92439	15407	12

The number of children reported missing in 2001, when compared to the number in 1996/ 1997, shows very high increase in Kolkata followed by Hyderabad, Mumbai and Chennai. On an average, 15,407 children are reported missing every year from these six metropolitan cities. It is interesting to note that although the number of female adults reported missing in Kolkata has declined consistently, the number of children reported missing in Kolkata remains the highest in comparison to other metropolitan cities. A study of the reasons for this phenomenon would be useful in addressing the issue of tracing the missing children.

Table 4 : Total number of children who continue to remain missing in metropolitan cities

Cities	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total of 6 years	Yearly average	2001 over 1996
Delhi	3837	4258	4722	4377	3848	2666	23708	3951	-31
Mumbai	484	711	500	528	549	528	3300	550	9
Hyderabad	100	129	146	170	136	185	866	144	85
Kolkata		779	837	777	1578	1524	5495	1099	96
Bangalore	257	195	227	239	307	272	1497	250	6
Chennai	13	3	30	31	27	26	130	22	100
Total	4691	6075	6462	6122	6445	5201	34996	5833	11

As regards the number of children who continue to remain untraced, the situation is quite grim in the metropolitan cities. There is consistent increase in their numbers in Kolkata and Hyderabad, whereas the trends are fluctuating in other cities. On an average, the number of children who continue to remain untraced in these six metropolitan cities comes to a mind-boggling figure of 5,833 per year”.

The law-enforcement scenario¹

Normally, investigation of a crime commences with the registration of an FIR (First Information report) by the police. FIR pre-supposes a cognisable offence. When it comes to a criminal offence like trafficking, etc., FIR is registered under the relevant sections of the substantive or special law and thereupon, investigation is carried out by the police. However, when it comes to the issue of a 'missing person' being reported to the police station, an entry is made in the General Station Diary (GD). No FIR is registered, except in certain states where a 'zero FIR' is registered. Zero FIR means that no crime number is assigned, because it is not considered a crime. The follow-up for the zero FIR and the GD entry is the same. The SHO (Station House Officer) forwards information to the Superintendent of Police/Deputy Commissioner of Police, who, in turn, forwards it to the office of the Chief of Police. Sometimes, the police stations and their supervisory officers also send messages to their counterparts. At the field level, the local police officials publicize the particulars of the missing persons in the media by putting out the available identification details and photographs. More often than not, the initial efforts to locate the missing person die down shortly. Sustained efforts to locate the person are extremely rare.

State police agencies have their own independent and different sets of procedures for tracing the missing persons. In Mumbai city, the information is relayed through a 'Police Notice'. This notice contains information about several other items such as 'vehicles stolen', 'vehicles recovered' and 'unclaimed dead bodies'. It is obvious that the information about 'missing persons' gets lost in the bargain and remains almost confined to the level of 'information' only.

Even in places where 'Hue and Cry Notices' are sent for locating the missing persons, there is not much difference in the efforts to locate the person. The message that reaches the Police Headquarters in the state is normally lodged with the Missing

¹ NHRC Report, *ibid*

Persons Bureau (MPB), which is more often a wing of the CID of the State Police. They, in turn, forward the message to the Missing Persons Wing in the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) at New Delhi. The message also gets relayed to the police chiefs of other states through police wireless. NCRB, at best, forwards this message to the chiefs of police in other states.

The 'Search Wing' in the Crime Records Section of NCRB coordinates and transmits information to other places. It is expected only to be a 'documentation centre' or at best, a 'transfer desk', because, as of today, NCRB does not investigate or monitor or facilitate recovery of the missing persons as a proactive organization. Therefore, nothing more is done in the NCRB to follow-up on the missing persons till they are traced. The police stations do not give any feedback to the NCRB when the missing person is rescued or returned and, therefore, the NCRB, despite being the national repository of 'crime data', is unaware of the current status of those reported missing.

“As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crime against children is enlisted under different heads like procurement of minor girls, kidnapping for abduction ranging from exporting to ransom and about 15,000 cases were reported in 2005 as against 14,423 in 2003.” ... “According to the National Human Rights Commission's report on trafficking of women and children, in Delhi alone, an average of 6,227 children go missing every year”
(Express News Service 'Missing children figures in Delhi rising each year' January 25, 2007)

The NCRB, under the TALASH Information System, maintains a national level database of 'Persons Arrested, Wanted, Kidnapped, Deserters, Escapees, Un-identified persons, Un-identified dead bodies and Proclaimed offenders'. The TALASH database of NCRB, as on August 2003, had 2, 01,710 items including 1, 09,626 records of missing persons.

In the NCRB, inputs to the TALASH system are received through wireless messages, fax, magnetic media, periodical statements and e-mails from State / UT Police and Central Police Organisations (CPOs). According to the Director, NCRB, the database is regularly updated and monthly reports are generated. As and when a query is received, it is processed and the results are disseminated to the concerned agencies. NCRB decided to build a database on 'traced / found children' by matching their information against the 'missing children'. The idea was that this information would be provided to the general public without any charge.

Accordingly, the input proforma for collection of information under the TALASH system has been revised and the necessary parameters about traced/found persons have been incorporated. However, the fact remains that the NCRB did not have the data even as of October 2003, on those traced/found.

NCRB is in the process of procuring a 'Facial Recognition System' based on Biometrics, which incorporates in itself the body measurements of the person. The 'Facial Search' will be integrated with the 'Attribute Search' of the TALASH Information System. Once the Facial Recognition System becomes operational, the NCRB hopes to achieve a large degree of coordination.

There is another disturbing dimension to the search efforts. Even though information about missing persons gets transmitted, as stated above, the time lag in the dissemination of messages to other police stations/districts/states becomes a crucial point. Due to the fact that the search for missing persons does not fall into the priority area of law-enforcement, these messages are met with unusual delays in transmission and action. Delay defeats the very purpose. Even after the receipt of the relayed messages in the field formations, due to the normal perception of such messages as being routine, nothing much happens as a follow-up of the received messages. (Source: Action Research on

Trafficking in Women and Children in India 2002-2003, NHRC P227)

How many cases are unregistered or unreported is unknown. How many missing children are still missing is also not known. Without a focused attempt to create a database that includes parameters of age, sex, and other demographic and psychographic profiling, as well as case / crime details and follow up reports, the statistics cannot lend themselves to any dependable interpretation.

The socio-economic spectrum of missing children in India has great range and diversity. Children leave home or disappear and may therefore be categorized as missing, for any one or a combination of reasons which include:

- To earn a living
- To escape abuse
- To elope
- To escape perceived threat or stress such as may be caused by exams or domestic violence
- Some are sold to labor contractors or sex traffickers
- Some are kidnaped for ransom

Every one of these children is equal to the other in that each one of them needs protection, guaranteed by law, government services and civil society. When a child goes missing, the first priority is the child's level of safety and the first concern is the efficacy of recovery mechanisms in place to track and find the child.

However, some of the ground realities we are currently dealing with are:

- Most parents and relatives of a missing child do not know where to go, what to do or when to decide that the child they can't find is missing and hasn't just run away to a relative's house in a nearby town or village.

- In the poorest parts of this country, the general perception is that people in 'authority' are difficult to approach regarding a missing child. Most often, the prevailing attitude reflects the thought that 'missing children' are not as high a priority as an obviously criminal case.
- Among the richest sections of this country, a missing child is either a potential crime related 'case' or a 'family matter'. The latter being especially true in the case of a girl child.
- The issue of Missing Children by itself seems to fall through cracks in legal structures for civil or criminal procedure. Popular perception and reported experience is that even the first step of making a complaint or filing a report is fraught with difficulty.
- Speed in track & trace efforts involving coordination between multiple agencies, is the most essential in recovering a missing child. Speed is mostly not a ground level reality in the functioning of any system currently approached to report a missing child.

In the gray spaces between these harsh truths, some of the most vulnerable children fall into black holes and disappear completely. These are the disabled, the girl child, the orphans and children in conflict with the law. The last category of child has absolutely nobody they can turn to for help, since the law that could perhaps be moved to help them, is also the law that they are in conflict with.

National figures from different reports on Missing children from a national daily

- *The average number of children declared “missing” annually in the country was calculated at 44,476*
- *The National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), the nation's central crime research organization, tabulates only cases of kidnaped children which it puts at 3196 for the year 2005 figures show a gradual upswing in the number of missing children in several states, led by Maharashtra (yearly average: 13,881), followed by Delhi (6,227) and Madhya Pradesh (4,915)*

- *Figures for 2006 are being compiled while according to police records in the past 15 years, 2,896 children have been reported missing and not found from various cities and districts of Gujarat*
 - *Maximum city Mumbai is also number one when it comes to missing children. In 2006 alone, Mumbai's missing minor registers recorded 948 children as untraced*
 - *The Patna High Court, while hearing a PIL on kidnappings, sought figures from district judges. Statistics showed that over 1,800 kidnapping cases were lodged in 2006 and 1,697 in 2005*
 - *An estimated 3,497 children, a majority of them girls, went missing last year and only 1,585 were recovered”*
 - *On an average, 170 kids go missing in Rajasthan every year*
 - *Over a thousand Kerala parents went through the ordeal last year*
 - *As of December 31 last year, the number of untraced children in MP was 1913*
 - *Of the 15,000 who went missing from the Capital last year, 7,000 were minors*
 - *From 2003 to 2006, of the 8,681 children who went missing, 8,014 were “traced” and 667 were recorded as 'untraced'*
 - *Assam's Director-General of Police R N Mathur admits that missing children are “a big problem in the state” ... From 2001 to 2005, for which complete figures are available, 3,673 children were reported missing”*
 - *It was finally on February 6, thanks to the court orders, that the government completed compilation of the figures of missing children for UP for the year 2006 and submitted to the court. As many as 3,649 children went missing in the State last year”*
- (Full coverage on Missing Children <http://www.indianexpress.com/>)*



Missing Children - link to Trafficking

Missing Children are often in a number of high-risk situations and the links with trafficking are of great significance. Each year, some 1.2 million children are trafficked worldwide, according to the United Nations. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe estimates that 200,000 individuals are trafficked annually from Eastern Europe, a significant proportion being children. Some become unpaid domestic servants, or work in sweatshops, but many more—boys, girls, teenagers—are forced into prostitution and crime.

What is "trafficking in persons"?

"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs; (Source: UN Global Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings

"Of the estimated 600,000 to 800,000 people trafficked across international borders annually, 80 percent of victims are female, and up to 50 percent are minors. Hundreds of thousands of these women and children are used in prostitution each year".

Source: The Link Between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

Bureau of Public Affairs

Washington, DC November 24, 2004

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/38790.htm>

A Channel Four television documentary, “Cutting Edge: The Child Sex Trade,” screened recently in Britain, showed how the authorities largely ignore the trafficking of children from eastern Europe.

Romanian filmmaker Liviu Tipurita returned to Bucharest, where he met up with 15-year-old Laurentiu, who has lived on the streets for most of his life. Three years earlier, Tipurita had filmed the boy living in a cardboard box with only a sweatshirt to wear. Laurentiu and his friends have a precarious existence. Of the little money they earn, mainly from begging and selling sex, much is spent fuelling their addiction to sniffing glue.

The documentary exposed how Western pedophiles were coming to Romania posing as tourists, and were then procuring boys for underage sex. “Tom,” from Britain, had originally come to Bucharest in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ceausescu regime to work in an orphanage. Using hidden cameras, Tom was shown discussing his Internet business—a web site offering to introduce men to Romanian boys. His clients came from throughout western Europe—Britain, Holland, Switzerland. He boasted that he had even supplied boys to a German judge.

From Bucharest, Tipurita travelled to Milan. In one district of Italy's most prosperous city, the film showed how Romanian boys, some as young as 10, were being pimped for underage sex, often by their own fathers, brothers and cousins.

Posing as a potential customer, and using a secret night-vision camera, Tipurita asked one young boy how much it would cost for one hour. He said he would have to ask his father. Thirty euros (\$35), came the reply. Suddenly, a police car drove by, but they were only interested in looking for “illegal immigrants,” Tipurita commented.

The growing popularity of India as a tourist destination, is bringing such tourism driven children commercial sexual trafficking to India's shores.

International federation Terre des Hommes estimates that 6,000 children between the ages of 12 and 16 are trafficked from Eastern Europe each year, with more than 650 being forced to work as sex slaves in Italy. According to the French human rights organisation, Albania is the county most involved in the sex trade, with women and children being lured to go to the West with false promises of marriage, jobs or education. When they get there, there is no husband, no job and no education. Alone in a foreign land without any means of support, violence and coercion ensure they are soon earning money for their new “owners.”

Trafficking in human beings is not confined to the sex industry. Children are trafficked to work in sweatshops as bonded labour and men work illegally in the “three D-jobs” – dirty, difficult and dangerous.

UNICEF put the global value of human trafficking at over \$12 billion a year, just \$2 billion less than Albania’s gross domestic product”. (Source: <http://www.countercurrents.org/hr-tylor251003.htm>)

The Indian situation on trafficking

In India the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) launched the Action Research on Trafficking in Women and Children, with the involvement of the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India. UNIFEM, supported NHRC for this project. The study has brought out some important facts and figures around trafficking.

The study has found a clear linkage between trafficking and those reported missing. **It has also brought to light that an average of 22,480 women and 44,476 children are reported missing in India every year. Out of which 5,452 women and 11,008 children continue to remain untraced.** Similarly the study found correlation between. Trafficking and migration. Law enforcement is hampered by serious limitations as trafficking is a very complex crime, extending beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of law enforcement officials. This is further

compounded by lack of proper procedures for assessment of age of the rescued victims, inadequacy of women police staff, and absence of training/orientation/infrastructure as well as page 153 public support systems.

Some findings from the NHRC Report

54.8% police officers give no priority at all to trafficking, 25.3 give it low priority, 12.2% consider it to be a medium priority issue and only 7.7% think it is a high priority issue

Reporting on trafficking appears to be only 40%. As stated by the police officers themselves, 60% of the cases go unreported

The sex-disaggregated data of law enforcement shows that 93% of those arrested, mainly under Section 8 A (ITPA), 95% of those chargesheeted and 90% of those convicted were women

40% of the police officials were not aware of the issue of trafficking

Only 6.6% of the police officials had undergone some sort of training/sensitization on the issue.

The NHRC comments that the government, through the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), has taken some important steps towards prevention of trafficking by introducing schemes like the SWADHAR and grant-in-aid programmes, which empower women and children by addressing their social and economic needs. However, a lot more needs to be done to bring in radical change in the given situation.

CHILDLINE response to the issue of Trafficking for child labour

CIF found a close link between the problem of Missing children and child labour. Mumbai has approximately 33,500 working children in the 6 to 14 age group, out of these approximately 12,500 work in the Zari industry alone. 80% of the working children in Mumbai are migrants, living without their families. 36% of children in the Zari industry are from Bihar. Most children working in the Zari industry in Mumbai suffer from malnutrition as well as transmittable diseases like scabies and tuberculosis because of despicable living conditions that are unsanitary and very cramped (hence close proximity to their peers). A large number of these children are mentally, physically and sexually abused. Corporal punishment ranges from hand beatings to hitting with metal rods every time they make a mistake. Similarly a number of children are also engaged in a number of other livelihood activities in subsistence sector. A large number of these children are not paid any wages on a regular basis on the specious plea that they are being trained, which increases their dependency on their employer.

NGOs like Pratham Mumbai Initiative, Bal Prafulta and Saathi, had been working with child labour for the past few years in a number of slums in the city. Subsequently the groups also got involved in the rescue operations. When CIF got engaged in the issue, it studied the condition of the communities in Bihar where they came from it was very clear that poverty and lack of educational infrastructure were the push factors in majority of cases. In addition, it was also seen that the parents (were not aware of) the children's condition : that they were in much worse poverty situation (in terms of lack of access to money or other resources or services) when they lived and worked with their employers in Mumbai. Therefore considering the special circumstances, in partnership with Pratham, CIF has set up CHILDLINES that are decentralized and penetrate till the source villages from where these children are trafficked for child labour.

It is also taking up the issue of impacting the wider development issues in Bihar (Based on Pratham and CIF, Need Assessment Report, unpublished 2006).

At first level, these CHILDLINE centres will provide emergency assistance to the caller. This may be specific need like education, medical, shelter and linking to sponsorship. However, at a deeper level, the CHILDLINE network will work as check mechanisms to ensure that children are sustained in their homes and are rehabilitated back into society and thus prevent children going back to the cities as child labourers. It will also mobilize important stakeholders like schools, panchayats, anganwadi workers and other development organizations to achieve these goals.



Worldwide Initiatives for Tracking Missing Children

The problem of missing children has been taken up with varying degrees of focus and severity across the world. Law enforcement agencies, counseling, and support services for parents and families, information technology tools and international cooperation have become key components of a global effort to tackle the situation.

Legal provisions and law enforcement are critical aspects of any strategic move towards change within the rights framework. Specifically where missing children are concerned, law and enforcement often take a dual approach.

On the one hand the assumption is made that a missing child needs protection in an unsafe environment. This lends urgency to legal provisions, procedures and their enforcement. Right from the first step of reporting that a child is missing, or taking up the responsibility for a child who is lost, enforcement agencies aim to be geared for immediate information sharing with the aim of locating the child or the child's family. At a national level, or in the case of cross-border cooperation, this invariably implies massive legal intervention and diplomatic cooperation.

On the other hand, the law is also capable of creating an environment where civil society is pushed to a consciousness of rights and the need to evolve into a more just and humane entity. The attitudes that a law reflects are important not only as a deterrent to crime but as a proactive tool of development oriented change. Translated in terms of possible impact, this means that every individual is conscious of the fact that a lost or missing child is the responsibility not just of parents and police but also of society.

An important consideration, sometimes relegated to the

background, is support at various levels to parents and relatives. A significant set of efforts are being made in the area of counseling and guiding the families of missing children. This takes various forms that include hand-holding through procedures and case follow-ups and psychological counseling. Apart from the direct results of these activities, the indirect consequence is a positive spillover of rising awareness levels in a one-to-one way. This has a different impact entirely from mass based awareness campaigns.

Among the most critical factors in the recovery of missing children is time and information. The use of information technology is a crucial part of strategy, research and recovery tools. IT is perhaps the top priority since the immediate sharing of information between multiple agencies is the most important operational factor in tracking and tracing a missing child, or a lost child's family. IT supports the creation of databases that may be accessed globally, to deal with diverse aspects of the missing child problem. Among other information, offences, offenders, trafficking data, case monitoring, statistics, trends and research become available for exchange and strategic cooperation.

International networking over missing children is a necessary consequence of grim realities. In a world that is used to cross-border sex trafficking and tourism, labor mafias and dysfunctional criminal minds, it cannot be assumed that a missing child is a runaway who will appear soon. It is also possible that a runaway can get into serious trouble and need to be rescued. Cooperation between countries goes beyond the sharing of information and experience. Often legal and political gateways are required for track and trace operations, to apprehend criminals and ensure the protection of rights.

Some organizations, initiatives and strategies currently related to work around missing children include:

- **The Vanished Children's Alliance** that “provides for the prevention, location, recovery and reunification of missing and abducted children.” Their web site has posters of missing children and missing child registration forms.

The VCA “assists law enforcement and families of missing children, and serves as an educational and abduction prevention resource on the local, national and international levels.” The organization conducts programs in schools and with parents on a sustained basis – quite apart from the services they offer, which include intensive case work management.

- **“The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s®** (NCMEC) mission is to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; help find missing children; and assist victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them. “Pursuant to its mission and its congressional mandates NCMEC

- Serves as a clearinghouse of information about missing and exploited children
- Operates a CyberTipline that the public may use to report Internet-related child sexual exploitation
- Provides technical assistance to individuals and law-enforcement agencies in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of cases involving missing and exploited children
- Assists the U.S. Department of State in certain cases of international child abduction in accordance with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction
- Offers training programs to law-enforcement and social-service professionals
- Distributes photographs and descriptions of missing children worldwide
- Coordinates child-protection efforts with the private sector

- Networks with nonprofit service providers and state clearinghouses about missing-persons cases
- Provides information about effective state legislation to help ensure the protection of children²
- The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children that “promotes the safety and well-being of children through activism, policy development and multinational coordination. Our programs and initiatives are uniting the world and providing international solutions to the problems of child abduction and exploitation.”

Among the multiple function areas of this centre that are detailed on their site, it is interesting to note that their news & events section monitors global news as diverse as worldwide child pornography laws at one end and the efforts of corporate entities towards working for Child Rights.

For example, this includes links to reportage of the recent Initiative adopted by banks and their credit card issuing members in Singapore, who are implementing financial systems by which the flow of funds to internet child pornography websites is cutoff.³

- An interesting example of a technological tool is LOCATER ... “a web-based program that enhances law enforcement’s ability to recover missing children by providing them with the tools necessary to rapidly disseminate images and information locally, statewide, or nationwide. LOCATER is available to any law-enforcement agency free of charge... .. The program allows agencies to distribute posters electronically and transmit the information to other agencies, media outlets, and the general public via Email distribution. Law enforcement agencies are also provided access to LOCATER WebMail to use to communicate with all LOCATER users nationwide.”⁴
- The Committee for Missing Children based in USA with a European branch in Germany has stated it's goal to be “ to help parents of missing and abducted children receive all the help and services they deserve and direct their requests, applications and questions to the appropriate agencies.”⁵

- In France, the Aide aux Parents d'Enfants Victimes (Aid for Parents of Child Victims) is primarily a support services organization. Quoting from their website, they are “an advocacy and support organization for the parents of child victims. Their services include: support and trauma assistance, court accompaniment, advocating for survivor and child rights, public education on children's and parent's rights in the court, helping to locate missing children” ... “The association aims to sensitize the administration, the ministry of justice , investigators and judges to the difficulties that the families actually face.”⁶
- The scale of operations and management of cases remains the bottom line of most of the effort internationally. “Child Focus, the European Center for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children”, is a Belgian foundation, recognized as being of public utility. For 7 years, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at both national and international level, the center actively supports investigations in disappearance, abduction or sexual exploitation of children and, secondly, tries to prevent and fight against these phenomena.” Their operations as listed on the website are, Call Management, Case Management, Files dealt with, Statistics and Networking.

International development is a key component of their activities and has “a threefold objective, with a view to combating the disappearances, abduction and sexual exploitation of children around the world:

- the development and dissemination of knowledge and expertise;
- the development of an operational network of NGOs in Europe;
- the positioning of activities in Europe.”

As a consequence of the first of these three objectives, a study called Childscope was carried out in 2004. As detailed on their website:

“Over the last few years, action to combat the disappearance and sexual exploitation of children has become an important priority

for the European Union. Under the Belgian Presidency, in September 2001, the Council of the European Union approved a resolution concerning the contribution of civil society organisations towards the search for missing or sexually exploited children, the 'Resolution on the contribution of civil society in finding missing or sexually exploited children (2001/C 283/01)'.

At the request of the European Commission, Child Focus and the IIRPC (Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy, University of Ghent) joined forces in 2003 to carry out a study on this subject. This study, entitled "Childoscope", consists of three parts:

- the number of missing and sexually exploited children in the 15 EU member countries;
 - the existence, role and structures of 241 civil society organisations in the 15 member countries and 4 candidate countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania) actively dealing with the problem of missing or sexually exploited children;
 - the legal basis that is needed to promote cooperation between non-governmental organisations and the competent authorities (protection of confidential information, criminal procedures, etc.)”⁷
-
- Interpol too has a section that invites international cooperation in dealing with the issues around missing children. The agency “maintains a database of missing and abducted children on behalf of the member countries”... The children are registered on their site on request from the respective law enforcement authorities of their countries who may feel that these cases require an international alert and monitoring.
 - “The UK Missing Kids Website was originally created in the USA by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). It was introduced to England, Wales and Northern Ireland in June 2000, and to Scotland in June 2004. The site is

managed by the Police National Missing Persons Bureau (PNMPB), and by a number of police forces. The UK Missing Kids Website is the only site of this kind which is approved by the Home Office, ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) and ACPO(S) (Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland). Only the police can enter information on the UK site. The ACPO document - *"Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2005"* - defines criteria for the use of the website by the police service. The Missing Kids Website has been introduced to 16 countries (see diagram below) and more are joining every year. The latest country to join was the Republic of Ireland.

Local grass-roots realities in every country are different, but a study of concepts, strategies, model initiatives and cross border cooperation gives fresh perspectives on an old problem that urgently needs solutions.

Notes:

1. <http://www.vca.org/>
2. <http://www.missingkids.com>
3. <http://www.icmec.org/missingkids/servlet/>
4. <http://www.locaterposters.org/>
5. <http://www.kinder-nach-hause.de/english/index.html>
6. <http://apev.org/article.php?sid=82>
7. <http://www.childfocus.be/>
8. <http://www.interpol.int/Public/Children/Missing/>
9. <http://www.amecoinc.org/>
10. <http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/>
11. <http://uk.missingkids.com/>
12. <http://www.terredeshommes.org/>
13. http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking_protocol.html



Indian efforts in Tracing Missing Children in India

A UNICEF initiated project model supported by the West Bengal government is already in operation in select cities. The primary project partner is the Don Bosco National Forum for Youth at Risk (YAR) and relies on technical back-up from the National Informatics Center (NIC). A network of nodal organizations which include among others Loreto Day School and CINI Asha, are integral to the project. (missingchildsearch.net)

The attempt is to use IT to link the police and organizations working with children, giving them access to a database of missing and lost children. Information uploads and retrieval using this single platform has led to some degree of success in tracking efforts. Analysis of project experiences will result in positive learning and possibly help replicate the model across the country.

Apart from this, there are some other organizations in India that have attempted to create viable platforms using IT and web tools, where information on missing children can be uploaded and accessed at a national level. For example, the National Center for Missing Children, NCMC, based in Indore offers online search and registration of missing children through their website www.missingindiankids.com Don Bosco's site at www.missingchildsearch.net also offers a space where a missing child can be reported and where member organizations can share information on lost and found children. www.missingchildreninindia.com attempts to bring police stations online in the same space where missing children reports can be uploaded by parents and others. Tamil Nadu's Missing Child Bureau (MCB) <http://www.tn.nic.in/socialdefence/mcb.htm> is "a governmental body under the Department of Social Defence providing services related to missing children with collaborative organisations like the Police, Non-Governmental Organizations

working for Children's welfare and Children's Homes both Government and private.”

The experiences of these organizations vary but it is commonly felt that it is difficult to coordinate, share data or speed up information relay. Further, the visibility of these projects suffers due to lack of awareness and communication to spread that awareness. The tools of technology are not always user friendly and if software is perceived as difficult to use or problematical, the willingness quotient of potential users decreases.

The Government, the Allied services, the Corporate, Development and Citizen sectors, need to converge to achieve a common goal - the protection of the rights of children who may be lost, missing or separated from their guardians and families.



The CHILDLINE experience

CHILDLINE is a national 24-hour emergency phone service for children in distress. Anchored by CHILDLINE India Foundation, (CIF), CHILDLINE links available services to children in need of care and protection. Operational in 75 cities across India, the CHILDLINE service has received over 11 million calls from children and worked with 3 million children in need of care and protection.

Thirty two percent of these interventions have been for missing children. Successful restoration of children to their families amounts to only 10.82 percent. (This is as per statistics available up to December 2006). This clearly indicates that there is a large discrepancy between children reported lost and children who are restored back to their families.

- CHILDLINE centres across the country have received about 66612 calls regarding missing children from 2004 to 2007.
- This constitutes 25% of the total direct intervention calls received by Childline during these years.
- According to the data 25% of the missing children are in the age group of 1-5 years and 64% are in the age group of 6-15 years.
- 70% of the missing children are male.
- 34% of the calls were received from the family/relatives and 15% from the allied systems (police, healthcare, education, transport, and media).

CHILDLINE services have been extended to various categories of children. Many among these categories are 'missing' children:

- Run away children
- Children who are lost
- Street children
- Trafficked children
- Children displaced from their homes and families due to conflicts/disasters
- Children in institutions
- Working children

However, the section below provides information on the cases reported to CHILDLINES for Missing Children or Lost children who get in touch with CHILDLINES anywhere in the country.

National Data from CHILDLINE for 2003-04 & 2004-05 for Missing Children: Profile of the Missing Children

Table 1 : Age Group

Age Group	Missing (%)	Repatriation (%)	Shelter (%)	Total (%)
1-5	25	6	10	14
6-18	71	88	83	80

Table 2 : Gender

Sex	Missing (%)	Repatriation (%)	Shelter (%)	Total (%)
Male	71	76	68	71
Female	27	22	29	27
Unknown	2	2	3	2

Table 1 & 2 indicate that a large number of children (80%) are in the age group 6-18 and majority are male (71%). This correlates to the national figures and profile of street children in India.

Table 3 : Who calls CHILDLINES for Assistance for Missing children?

Caller & Missing	Type of Assistance requested & interventions			
	Missing	Repatriation	Shelter	Total
Parents/Family	19	1	8	10
Allied Systems	11	27	20	19
Others (Concerned adult, NGO personnel, CHILDLINE members, Child himself)	70	72	72	71

The above table indicates that the maximum reporting of missing children was from CHILDLINE, other NGOs, concerned adults and child itself when a lost child reports to a child line for help in repatriation or shelter. The cases reported at CHILDLINE had only 10% of parents requesting for help in finding a missing child. The reporting with police would probably be largely from the parents. Around 19% of calls to CHILDLINES about missing children came from the allied systems.

CHILDLINE statistics also yield high volume and low volume cities for missing child calls. The following table gives figures for spread of missing children reports received across the CHILDLINE in 73 cities.

Table 4: Zone wise Distribution of Missing Children

Zone	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
East	3586	4127	4807
West	4275	3451	3633
North	5810	5582	6048
South	8578	8722	7993
Total	22249	21882	22481

As can be seen in Table 4, the maximum no. of calls received was in the South in all the three years - from 2003 to 2006. One obvious reason is that CHILDLINE has maximum representation in the South (23 CHILDLINES). Moreover, the number of 'missing' calls in South was high in the year 2004-05 due to the Tsunami, when a large number of adults and children went missing. In the most severely affected regions, a large number of missing persons were not found even after a year and a sizeable number was assumed to be dead.

Table 5 : Average no. of calls per city

Zone	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
East	239	243	283
West	305	230	242
North	726	620	550
South	536	545	500

As the distribution of CHILDLINEs across the four zones is not uniform, the average number of calls per city per year can give us a better estimation of the volume of calls. By this yardstick, the northern Zone has recorded the highest number of 'missing cases' followed by the Southern zone.

The following table provides data on the cities that recorded highest number of calls for missing children in each zone. Thus as a single location, Delhi received maximum number of calls in the country. The three major metros – Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai – are the places where a number of children come in search of employment, or are lured by the big dream and glamour associated with the big cities. In the South the largest number of calls for missing children was from Vijaywada. A possible explanation is that Vijaywada is major railway junction where the Southern and Eastern railways connect the poverty belt (mainly from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa) / moffusil areas to metros.

In addition, on long-term basis, some common factors may be identified between all these locations. These cities are all major railway hubs, the general experience with the police and the allied systems is positive and the level of awareness and literacy is high. While these factors can help explain the high volume of reports, they do not really indicate an actual case volume. In the South, other than Vijaywada, Trichy and Nagapattinam are high volume 'missing child' cities.

Table 6: Maximum no. of calls recorded by a city by Region (%)

Zone	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
East-Kolkata	42	41	43
West-Mumbai	57	30	38
North-Delhi	62	63	60
South-Vijaywada	24	29	32

CIF has noticed that though Patna remains a city with a low volume of calls to 1098 for missing children, the actual incidents reported are high. The local environment is visibly disturbing as people have little to no confidence in police and the other allied systems. The perception is that violent crime and a criminal nexus is deep rooted and all pervasive. People tend to feel discomfort and an inability to approach police or other administrative officials and the general level of expectation is low. Missing children are possibly not seen as being on a list of priorities. To address this situation a multi pronged approach comprising government directives, intensive involvement of grassroots NGO staff experienced at dealing with the local conditions and possibly third party monitoring of accountability and enforcement would need to be devised.

Added to this are economic factors that lead to organized trafficking and the voluntary 'sale' of children by their families. The poorest sections of society are the most vulnerable and often the least able to access protection or resources. The reasons are many and include lack of education and awareness of rights and legal procedures, a constant engagement with poverty, the urgent need to get enough money to subsist and often the fact that administrative systems are worn thin at many places with negative attitudes and practices.

Table 7: Distribution of Calls for missing children (Parents Asking for Help & Child Lost)

Zone	2003-04		2004-05		2005-06	
	PAH	Child Lost	PAH	Child Lost	PAH	Child Lost
East	912	771	1108	562	1193	805
West	864	645	604	656	761	897
North	1946	1559	2065	1611	927	1611
South*	2096	916	2287	919	4460	181

Table 7 shows that the maximum number of Parents Asking for Help (PAH) for missing child was from the South region. The term PAH indicates when a child goes missing and parents come to CHILDLINES asking for assistance. The term Child Lost here indicates when a child who has gone missing, reports to CHILDLINE in the cities. The cases of PAH are much higher than Lost children seeking assistance.

A closer look at data throws up some interesting facts. One such is the increase in incidents of children disappearing during festival times. The reason could be that they get lost in crowded celebrations or travel conditions. Strategic solutions would need to be preventive. Preventive would manifest as increased alertness among the allied services, primarily police, transport and medical as well as specific mass media communication to make people conscious of the problem at festival time. Drafting in the services of volunteers and NGO staff at critical 'danger' points where crowded conditions are expected could be quite effective.

The vulnerability of the victims is responsible for children being sold to labour contractors or forced into the sex trade. Parents living lives of deprivation fall prey to promises of earnings from

their children's labour. Organized trafficking of children for labour or sex operates despite the law and in the face of activist resistance. Children from one state are transported to another, or from one country to another, lured by 'income earning opportunities' and the dream of doing better in life and sending back money to their families.

Missing children lack support systems and therefore are vulnerable to neglect, exploitation and abuse. They often find themselves in situations of crisis; abused physically or sexually, exploited for illegal activities and at times forced into a life of institutional care. They suffer emotional trauma, depression, and other psychological ill-effects. The crisis and trauma affects the child as well as his/her family.

Based on CHILDLINE experiences, our learning is that there needs to be a strong coordination between diverse agencies dealing with children. This will not only prevent delay in tracking and repatriating a lost / missing child but will also offer a single point of contact for the caretakers/parents of that child.

This is a call to action on all fronts for a sustainable, solution driven, long term perspective on the situation. The current need is for an analysis of existing efforts and procedures, to be followed by defining needs and requirements. Phased planning and closely monitored implementation of those plans is the immediate aim. To achieve this, multiple stakeholders must be willing to meet on a common platform to tackle various aspects of the situation.

The reality is often a bitter story of exploitation, abuse, captivity, and often separation from families. Some of these missing children are runaways. Others are 'bought' by contractors and have nobody to turn to but the same people who have 'bought' them.

Clearly, no single approach can be taken when conditions are so diverse. Only by studying the differences and specific circumstances can solution strategies evolve.



Critical Observations

We present here some critical comments, some observations and a some potential recommendations. At this point of time, it is necessary to emphasis that the objective here is not to define a set of clear recommendations; rather it is to raise questions and issues that need to be considered in any recommendation for tackling Missing Children.

The Child:

a. Child Identification - Tagging each Child: From time to time various organizations including the Government has considered the idea of a single Social Identity Number to each Indian. Nearly a decade ago the Election Commission introduced the Electoral Photo Identity Card- it is now mandatory for all voters (http://www.eci.gov.in/ECI_voters_guideline_2006.pdf). As per the web site of the Election Commission, the registered base of Voters as on 2006 is 698,364,370.

The Targeted Public Distribution System of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution , which was introduced in 1992 and has become effective 1997 covers nearly 60 million households – with a particularly large coverage of rural Below Poverty Level families. Food grains are distributed thru 4.78 million outlets.

Similarly, the District Information System for Education (DISE) covers nearly 60% of India's districts and deploys competent NIEPA designed software for capturing students upto the first 8 years enrollment in schools. The Ministry for Human Resource Development has reported total enrollment figures of All -India for children studying upto 12th standard of 188,098,315 as of 2001. (<http://www.dpepmis.org/webpages/ytabs/stat12.htm>). Thus, if we study the registered and aided school enrollment figures we can see a wealth of data as well as organizations that have the established base to add to the data base.

Perhaps the first step towards an eventual goal of Single Social Identity Number is to be able to get a unified data base of children as extracted from the PDS and available nationwide school data. Our estimate is that the existing databases of these two sources alone will yield a data base of nearly 250 million children- that's over half of the nation's children. Tagging each child with a unique number, which represents a set of data covering genealogy, geographic quadrants, language and medical history, educational profile and other relevant data, may help in getting the identification when a child goes missing and monitoring the progress in such cases. Besides, such targeted data would be the next step towards a nation that ensures micro-targeted social projects and empowers children. The task of putting together a unified database on the nation's children could be undertaken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development , which could set up a task force to work with other ministries and develop the data base.

Our goal would be to ensure that by the time of the next Census in 2010-11 we should have put in place the database formats as well as a base data, so that the Census department can then add the Census of India's children as a additional format for the Census. That will then become the comprehensive data base of India's children. This would facilitate a report to a Central Missing Children's Centre to be auto -forwarded as a complaint for registration on receipt of an FIR by local Police filed after a Preliminary Investigation (PI)

b. Post separation trauma: A child who has been taken away from home, family and familiar neighborhood, either forcibly or with parental consent or voluntarily (driven by family circumstances) is likely to be under extreme stress from insecurity, and exposure to hostile elements- whether natural or human created. Adults who come in contact with such a child may not recognize the extreme psychological state of the child, or may be unable to deal with it. There does not seem to be any accessible study on the state of such a child. Does the child need special counseling? Can the child communicate? It is important

to recognize the various mental states in which children of different ages are likely to be at various stages after being separated from home and family. Studies done in the US on kidnapping victims (for e.g. the 'Stockholm syndrome') established some base for dealing with victims.

Rehabilitation of children who have been rescued from situations of abuse is critical. Abused and exploited children may retain lifetime psychological and physical scars. Strategies that ensure effective detection and rescue but not rehabilitation of such children could lead to new levels of child abuse in which the child may be a willing participant, seeing that as a more secure environment as compared to an indifferent world. Rehabilitation that involves merely returning the child to it's parents without ensuring effective integrated rehabilitation will simply not be effective.

Is the answer a combination of family and counseling support? Would a period of stabilizing at a special institution with parents being made a part of the process be effective? Obviously the system has to provide for all possible alternatives as there won't be a one-size-fits-all solution.

The immediate Family:

The immediate family, particularly parents, will be under extreme stress, especially if the child has been forcibly abducted. Depending on geography and socio-economic status, parents will have varying levels of ability to reach out to police or other government /quasi government agencies for help. What is needed is that they interface with one easily accessible body, and get immediate assurance that all possible steps are being taken. They need to visibly see the efforts taking place- where this is possible. Communication with them through a single point of contact at all times and constantly posting them of investigation status is critical in obtaining maximum cooperation from them. Establishing the trust of the parents and immediate family is very critical. If parents come from socio-economically backward spaces and

have been part of the process for sending their child out then the system needs to address those circumstances and ensure stabilization of these. This is a precondition for rehabilitating the child otherwise the problem will manifest itself once again with perhaps a far worse impact on the child. Parents who live off the income from either child trafficking or child labour need to be dealt with a combination of socio-economic measures, counseling as well as judicial-punitive measures. Communities must be sensitized and enabled to become supportive of individual members and to develop their own monitoring tools and procedures.

Another important issue is that of interfaces available to the parents of missing children- they are too many and too complex leading to parental fatigue and a fatalistic attitude.

Community:

Community and government must have the strongest stake in child-protection. The traditional framework where the Government provides the legislative framework and security infrastructure but the community must take the lead has to change. Both government and community must “own” every child and every child must feel a blanket of protection simply by virtue of being a child.

Communities need to become strong stakeholders in the protection of children in each neighborhood. The community's level of awareness and action on the following issues in particular will have a major impact on relocating and rehabilitating the missing/ trafficked child.

- Perceptions about Child labour and crimes related to children
- Awareness about Child Trafficking, organ trade, and related activities.
- Organized community initiatives for child protection
- Linkages with initiatives of local NGOs.
- Linkages with government/ quasi government agencies involved in child protection

Each of these areas implies a well defined set of activities and

programs from communication programs, creation of community support structures, volunteering from community members, and representation to agencies that are involved in child protection. Communities need to become strong stakeholders in the protection of children in each neighborhood. The community needs to be able to identify with a name/logo that stands for missing children initiatives.

Police:

Interaction with the police is perceived to be a problem rather than a step towards a solution. However, police will be the first and most likely face of governance system that the parents and the concerned child is likely get in touch. With the other functions and responsibilities of dealing with the culprits, the skills and sensitivity required for dealing with the traumatized children and parents may be a new area. Sensitisation and training on these issues is required at various levels to increase the positive intervention needed for rehabilitation processes for rescued children. A beginning is made in this direction by separate police force (Juvenile Aid Police Unit) where the groups are constantly exposed to the child-centred approach and to child rights through training.

Judicial:

The term “Missing Children” needs a contextual definition that can be applicable across all legislations and across all stakeholders. Missing children could be trafficked children - which has its own set of definitions, abducted children, children who have run away from home, children against whom crimes have been committed such as murder /sacrifice/ sexual abuse/ etc, children who have been sent away by parents/family members i.e. sold or abandoned children. Child Trafficking, the world’s leading cause of missing children is in fact not defined in the Indian Statute at all- the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act as well as JJ Act do not define child trafficking. Should we not simply accept the UN definition of trafficking and apply an age based parameter to it? While some of these are in the realm of crime, some are purely socio-economic related. Therefore the

set of actions required would be different. In all cases, however, the common factor would be tracing/rescue, counselling/rehabilitation.

Ensuring that children are willing participants in the judicial process to prosecute criminals is important. This process must facilitate safety for children who report child crimes to the system. The Judiciary must not only be easily accessible to children in distress but also needs to be recognized by children as a friend and ally. Legal aid for children needs to reach children quickly and effectively.

A facilitating framework to monitor implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000 and the Amendment Act, 2006 along with other relevant acts, need to be placed under the scrutiny of a court appointed Ombudsman.

The judicial process can often be so expensive, long and tedious that it is not perceived to be practically possible to engage with. This needs to be urgently addressed. How can we ensure that all cases relating to children automatically be on the fast track justice process?

Governance:

Both at the Union and at the state government levels, a number of ministries and departments deal with diverse aspects of missing children – detection, social equity/justice, legal, community support infrastructure, medical, education, child rehabilitation. There is a need for a clear inter departmental mechanism to effectively coordinate actions meant for a common target group. A universal platform with responsibility and authority vested together needs to be created. Cross-sectoral coordination both at union and state government levels needs to be facilitated. India's children need to be on a comprehensive data base with a single identification.

Annual updates of missing children data taken from a variety of sources, is necessary. Facilitating expansion of networks like the

CHILDLINE 1098 to all parts of the country with budgetary support is necessary.

State funded education system must become the fulcrum for child welfare activities. Legislation that covers various aspects of the issue needs to be reviewed and not only loopholes plugged but also clear processes for implementation need to be evolved. NGOs and other civil society organizations need to become stakeholders for implementation and monitoring of these processes.

Civil Society Organisations

By and large NGOs working with children have established a history of credibility and trust with the community. Driven by changing governance over the last decade to delivering and monitoring last mile services in the development sector, NGOs have had to grow swiftly and incorporate logistics management, communication methods and operations research techniques in order to achieve operational efficiencies. However, they are severely handicapped by factors such as lack of adequate budgetary support, low interest amongst the prime work force for development sector assignments and a generally hostile attitude from the police force.

Security Forces

Global trends impact every country- media and cross border economics of trade impact the 'human supply' chain. All strategies to tackle the issue of missing children must be able to link with international efforts. Cross-border trafficking is here to stay and is complex and technology savvy. It is necessary to curb demand. Demand will feed child trafficking. And the poorest of the poor will feed the supply chains.

In India, the role of the armed services that protect national boundaries is under Central Government control. Human trafficking, disguised as tourism and trade related movement, particularly between countries which have open border protocols

with India (Nepal, Bhutan) is not on their active agenda- primarily because it is disguised and not apparent On the other hand, state police have restricted jurisdiction for people outside of their borders. The role of Police or other security /protection services with regard to missing children are neither spelt out nor demarcated. States often will not see the issue of “other state's” children being trafficked in their state as their problem. It is important to deliberate on how the role of police in missing children detection be made effective and unified across state boundaries?

Media

Media has enormous impact and any strategy must consider the role of media. Media management involves accurate information at rapid speed but must also disseminate that information in a cost effective, location and environment specific way. Priority given to public service information dissemination by major media broadcasters can play a very useful communication channel for tracing missing children. These databases need to be also linked to the centralised tracking unit proposed in the following section.

Health Care Sector:

Medico-ethical practices for organ transfers needs to be far more closely monitored. The process should be quick to benefit potential receivers of organs; however at the same time it should be transparent, with a system of checks and balances. Those using children to supply the organs trade are criminals and must be tried and punished. Legal deterrents of the highest kind need to be conceived and effected most urgently.



Strategic approach to a National Missing Children Initiative

The aim of a National Missing Children Initiative may be identified as being the creation of a socio-political-legal environment where institutions, services, and individuals across sectors respond proactively and with a sense of immediacy to address the multi-dimensional problem of Missing Children.

Such an Initiative would be required to play a critical role in anchoring a centralized effort that networks with partners and stakeholders. Child Rights groups would have to work hand in hand with the Government and Allied services, (such as Police, Transport, Labor, Education, Justice Systems), to register, follow up, monitor and close cases of missing and lost children.

The expected consequence of the components of such an Initiative would be Planning and implementation of a phased, dynamically evolving series of projects and activities leading to a Solution-package to the problem of Missing Children

- Children's database creation.
- Close collaboration between the government and multiple stakeholders, including at the most far reaching level – the citizen sector. Facilitating the process of creating a comprehensive 'tracking strategy' and procedures would be the most critical consequence of this collaborative platform.
- Amendments in the law and the creation of new legal structures and policy that specifically address issues around Missing Children.
- Developing a common protocol between networked stakeholders on Missing Children, so that there is a common understanding of roles and requirements.
- Adopt a nation-wide protocol for police forces and set up linkages between state police forces, border security forces and other industrial security forces.
- Acquire specialized skills in dealing with traumatized children

and set up a process framework for rehabilitating children who have been rescued.

- The development of a nation wide networking of services linked to a central monitoring system that registers cases, tracks and monitors, closes cases, develops strategic solutions at a macro-level and creates a database. This database will be comprehensive and include repeats, offences and offenders, and facilitate the recording of statistics that lend themselves to interpretation with a degree of dependability that does not currently exist.
- Evolve and implement a nation-wide communication program to create awareness and sensitize people.
- Develop a framework for community support initiatives.
- Link up with international agencies for sharing data as well as for tracking and rescue.

The design and definition given to a national Initiative on missing children is crucial to all future policy, programs and action. Based on the structures visualized, the Initiative may become a continuously evolving series of processes tackling existing problems and anticipating future requirements.

A comprehensive set of components is required to be put in place together, since any one or a combination of some will not be enough to tackle the multiple problem areas that need to be dealt with.

CIF Missing Children Tracking Unit – This is the 'operations' section of the Initiative, focusing on calls and cases, following up at ground level on all reports of missing and lost children.

Role of the missing children centre / tracking unit

- Creation of a national child protection database
- Compiling a database of missing children
- Facilitating the development of a single national Website, hosting and linking to other relevant National and Global websites of entities working in the same field

- Networking with organizations like CHILDLINE across the country and between child protection agencies and allied services with the aim of tracking, tracing and closing the cases of missing children

The track, trace and repatriation process flow is the nuts and bolts of Operations. Briefly, when a child goes missing, the desired process flow is:

The family or guardian calls for help and this call goes either to the police or an organization with high field presence, such as CHILDLINE.

Immediate information exchange between police and organization is followed by relay of information to the Missing Children Tracking Unit. Here data is cross checked with available lost / found cases.

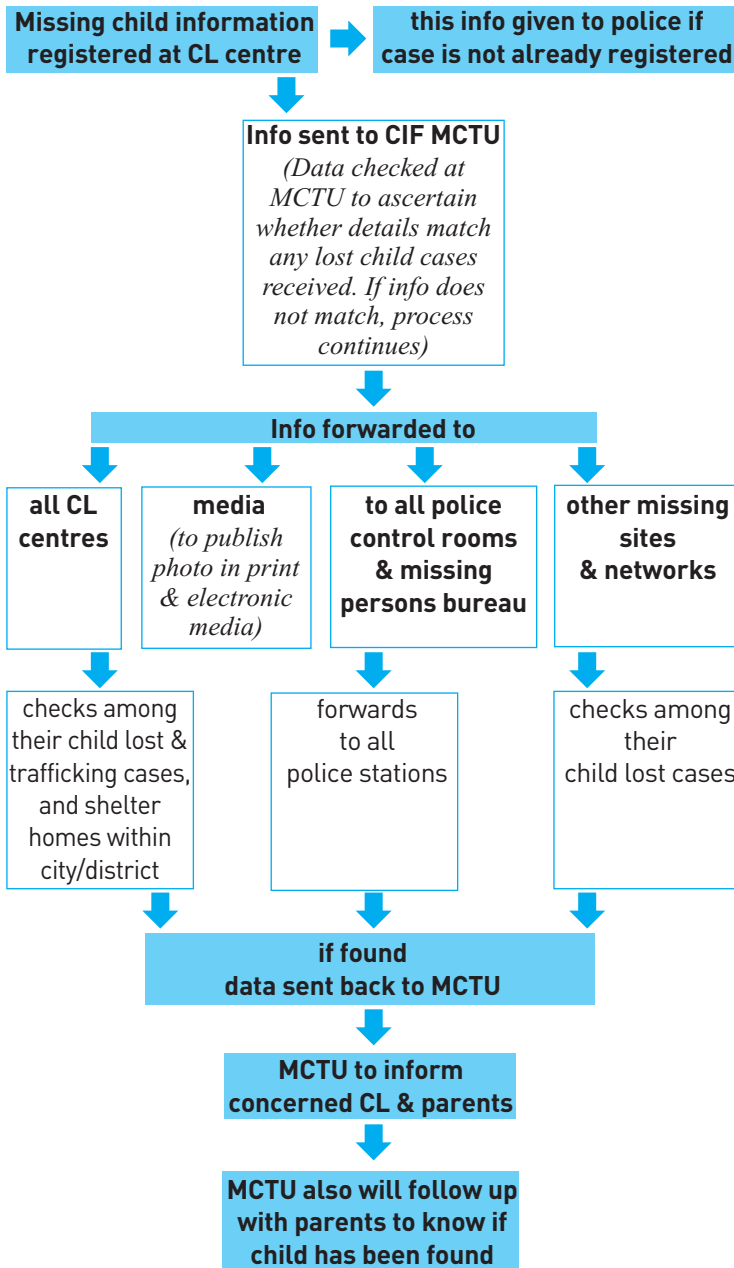
The tracking unit simultaneously forwards the information to the network of primary Initiative partner organizations across India, as well as to all police control rooms and other linked sites and organizations that work with children.

The information relay now continues further down the line at two levels. Police control rooms relay to all police stations. The other organizations follow up with their own sub-networks and cross-check with their own lost/found cases.

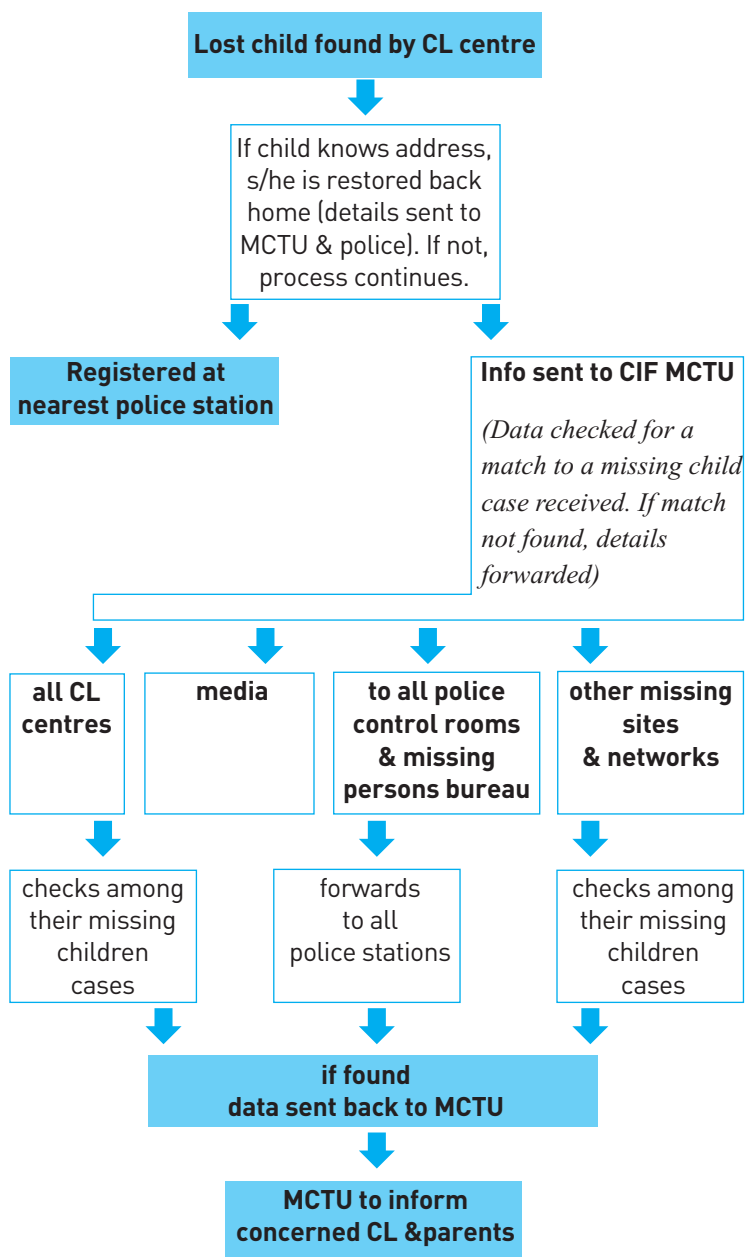
At any point in the above process, when a child is found and repatriated, the case is officially to be closed at the Missing Children Tracking Unit and a copy of the case papers returned to the primary source. (The point where 'Family calls for help')

Critical to all information relay in the process flow that is expected to be the most challenging aspect, is method and technology. IT and web based technologies are not uniformly present or used across the country. To plug the gaps will take focus, situation analysis, trainings, investment, and the development of alternate, local strategies based on experience.

Process flow - Parents asking for help



Process flow – child lost



Research and Strategy

This is the think tank of the Initiative. Work on research and strategy is heavily dependant on the data collected at the tracking centre (Operations level) as well as related independent studies undertaken under this component of the Initiative.

All strategic planning for process, communication, cooperation, new activities and focus identification in the short and long term will be based on interpretations and recommendations emerging from here.

The importance of this component is not restricted to Missing Children alone. Facts and studies emerging from this area are expected to be useful inputs for others working in the Child Rights field and attempting to access dependable data.

Advocacy

Focused and sustained advocacy, based on continually evolving strategies recommended by the Initiative's 'think tank' is a critical component. All lobbying, meetings, discussions and events, project presentations, communications and canvassing using the Media, will aim to highlight needs and priorities and place them before policy makers, government departments, ministries, politicians and decision makers.

Initiative partners play a critical role in monitoring procedures and plan implementation at every level. A continuously evolving system that involves networking between partners and stakeholders, also requires that check points, accountability and appraisals are in-built. If gaps and weaknesses emerge, they need to be addressed and appropriate corrective steps taken.

The fact is that policy, systems and directives cannot guarantee the desired consequence. Human error and attitude, capacity and commitment levels, comfort or discomfort with technology and any of a number of such factors can cause a system to fail at any point. An alert preparedness to plug these gaps as they appear by advocating for appropriate change is necessary for the long term success of this Initiative.

Networking & Social mobilization

To increase the involved participation of multiple stakeholders and to create and strengthen partnerships with the Corporate and Citizen sectors.

Networking is the only practical method of addressing every operational angle of a national initiative. It is an umbrella solution that provides the widest protective cover to a missing child. It is safe to assume that such a child may be encountered at multiple points including, rail / road transport hubs, hospitals, shelter homes and police stations. The citizen sector could cross paths with a lost child at a market place, a street corner or any typical public space. NGO's working in fields as diverse as sex trafficking, migrant labor or disability could come across cases of lost or missing children. If the network is extensive, the likelihood of tracing a missing child or tracking down the family of a lost one is high.

Social mobilization gains new meaning in this context, making community participation an extension of networking. We are working in a space where a child may be completely unable to reach or ask for help for any one or a combination of reasons. It is the alert, conscious, and responsible adult individual across sectors of society who must identify as being part of the strongest safety net.

Family support

Working with the families of missing children, supporting and counseling them and helping them in their interactions with the Allied Services is a key component of the Initiative. Most families are lost in the confusion of possibilities and unable to deal with the logistics of procedures such as registration. Helping them get in touch with support organizations that work with missing children is another method of extending support, as is counseling when needed.

A prevention aspect is also inherent in this component and overlaps with the awareness and education component as

detailed next. Parents are the first affected in the event of a missing child. Invariably relatives and the local community step in and play a part in the situation. Their attitudes and responses to those immediately affected is an important area for intervention.

The concept of creating a supportive community goes hand in hand with community awareness and training efforts. This is especially significant under certain circumstances. In clusters and pockets where high poverty levels lead parents to give up or send off their children with 'contractors', it isn't individual families alone that need support. The entire local community needs to be brought to the point of constructive engagement with the issue.

Public Education & Awareness campaigns at multiple levels

This is the communication component comprising publications, workshops, events, and interactive spaces that raise awareness levels and help create a society that is proactive about dealing with the Missing Children situation.

One of the first needs that would have to be addressed is the preparation of a simple, multi-lingual reader friendly handbook of FAQs about missing children. This would include a step-by-step description of legal recourse available and police procedures meant to be followed.

Sustained awareness and sensitization campaigns conducted in a phased manner with follow-up and assessment parameters will need to be undertaken with different segments across society.

Possible target groups will include:

- Allied services personnel
- NGO staff
- Rural communities
- Urban Neighborhood communities
- Educational Institutions
- Corporate entities
- Media professionals

Information Technology

The focus here is on exploring partnerships with the IT sector to help create software and IT models that can adapt to the ground level realities we deal with in this country. The multiple uses of web based programs and IT tools in operating track and trace systems, data collection, quantitative analysis and configuring MIS to specific requirements are part of developing the required infrastructure.

IT tools by themselves cannot drive a system. Researching the use and studying user groups of IT is important to analyze opportunities and weaknesses. Parallel efforts aiming to increase user capability through ongoing trainings are also therefore a part of this component.

Legal structures and Intervention

The prevailing perception seems to be that there is confusion at every step of the legal recourse available for missing children. To be missing is not by itself a crime or related to criminal activity. Yet the law needs to provide for measures that protect children, whether or not criminal activities are involved in the condition that a child is 'missing'.

This is perhaps the weakest part of any effort made so far to address the issue. Yet in the long run, laws and their implementation by law enforcement agencies are a powerful force in civil society.

This final component of the Missing Children Initiative is an analysis of law as it exists in other countries and the requirements from the legal system in this country. Recommendations and lobbying based on studies, workshops, seminars and conferences will aim to find solutions through the application of legal structures and enforcement.

The action programme to deal with the Trafficking issue suggested by NHRC is also relevant for dealing with the missing children.

These include:

- *Sensitization of officials, creation of public awareness and generation of accountability*
- *Facilitation of individual or group activities on prevention, protection and prosecution*
- *Setting up a national network of government officials (Nodal Officers) in all states and linking them up with NGOs and INGOs across the country.*

The Recommendation and suggestions based on the NHRC research are grouped under the following categories.

- *Cross-cutting issues*
- *Prevention of trafficking*
- *Protection of victims and survivors*
- *Prosecution of traffickers and other exploiters*

Heading the list of priorities is the creation of a common platform by primary stakeholders, to drive a National Missing Children Initiative. This is already underway with the government playing a crucial role in bringing together organizations like UNICEF, CHILDLINE and the NIC (National Information Center) to study and design strategic solutions.

Looking ahead a key area of focus is the creation of a national database, which should include offences and habitual offenders, such as traffickers and labor contractors, quite apart from the demographic and case information on missing / lost children.



Role of CIF and CHILDLINE

An assessment of CHILDLINE India Foundation's presence in the field of Child Rights in India indicates a strong capacity for facilitating the process of creating a National Initiative.

- CHILDLINE's telephone helpline services and interventions operate through a network of over 170 organizations spread across 25 states and union territories. This makes it feasible to use existing routes for immediate information relays
- CHILDLINE centers across the country have received about 66000 calls regarding missing children in the last 3 years
- In older CHILDLINE cities, the Allied systems including the Police, Healthcare, Judicial & Juvenile justice, have developed close links and interdependence
- The CHILDLINE Advisory Board (CAB) in every CHILDLINE city, comprising of senior members of the Allied systems is an existing, functioning entity that can provide high level support to the initiative
- A history of positive interactions with various Ministries and departments of the Government of India has created a relationship environment conducive to the collaborative functioning that is essential to the success of a national Initiative
- The existing reach that CIF has, provides an advantage to other Missing Children sites & organizations, that can engage in a healthy exchange of value, sharing and receiving information by joining the network
- Data proves that about 75% of missing children are trafficked. Since the CHILDLINE service is a generic service and intervenes in all kinds of rescue cases, it is in a position to identify links & track missing children from amongst these cases.

Appendix 1

Links for Missing Children's organizations:

International Center for Missing and Exploited Children
(www.missingkids.com)

National Missing Children's Locate Center, Inc (NMCLC)
(www.nmclc.org)

Child Quest International, Inc (www.childquest.org)

Child Search (www.childsearch.org)

Christin Lamb Foundation (www.clamb.org)

Children Missing Organization (www.children-missing.org)

Interstate Association for Stolen Children
(www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/6042/)

Nations Missing Children's Organization (www.nmco.org)

Vanished Children's Alliance (www.vca.org)

North American Missing Children Association (www.namca.com)

Missing Children Help Center (www.800usakids.org)

Nevada Child Seekers, Inc (www.nevadachildseekers.org)

International Center for the Search and Recovery of Missing
Children, Inc. (www.icsrmc.org)

The Lost Child (www.lostchild.net)

Jacob Wetterling Foundation (www.jwf.org)

Missing Youth Foundation (www.missingyouth.com)

The Polly Klaas Foundation (www.pollyklaas.org)

Paul and Lisa Program, Inc (www.paulandlisa.org)

Heidi Search Center for Missing Children, Inc. (www.heidisearchcenter.org)

Garden Of Missing Children Society (GOMCS) (www.gomcs.org)

The Laura Recovery Center Foundation (www.ircfoundation.org)

The Child Connection (www.petsforum.com/childconnection)
Lost Children Network (www.lostchildren.org)
Klaas Kids Foundation (www.klaaskids.org/)
Nevada Child Seekers, Inc (www.nevadachildseekers.org)
Missing Children - Minnesota
(<http://www.missingchildrenmn.org>)
Missing Children's Network of Michigan, Inc. (www.i2k.com/-mcnmi)
National Center for Missing Youth (www.operationlookout.org/)
Missing Persons Cybercenter (hollywoodnetwork.com/hn/mpc/index.html)
TroubleShooters International Inc. (www.tshooters.com/mpi/missing.htm)
A.M.E.N (www.geocities.com/~guardianangels/)
Child Watch of North America (www.childwatch.org/)
Instant technologies, Ltd (missing.inthe.net/index.asp)
Child CyberSEARCH of Canada (www.childcybersearch.org)
Child Find Canada (www.childfind.ca//)
Child Find Prince Edward Island
(www.virtuo.com/childfind/index.html)
Missing Children Society of Canada (www.mcsc.ca)
Missing Children Society of Canada
Missing Children Society of Canada - Eastern Region
Missing Children Society of Canada - Western Region

North American Missing Children Association, Inc. **
The Missing Children"s Network **

** AMECO Member (Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations,

Appendix 2

Report on India from the US Department of State "Trafficking in Persons report, 2006"

(<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/66086.pdf>)

INDIA (TIER 2 WATCH LIST)

India is a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of forced or bonded labor and commercial sexual exploitation. The large population of men, women, and children — numbering in the millions — in debt bondage face involuntary servitude in brick kilns, rice mills, and zari embroidery factories. Some children endure involuntary servitude as domestic servants. Internal trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced marriage also occurs. The Ministry of Home Affairs estimates that 90 percent of India's sex trafficking is internal. India is also a destination for women and girls from Nepal and Bangladesh trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, boys from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are trafficked through India to the Gulf states for involuntary servitude as child camel jockeys. Reportedly, Bangladeshi women are trafficked through India for sexual exploitation in Pakistan. Moreover, Indian men and women migrate willingly to the Gulf for work as domestic servants and low-skilled laborers, but some later find themselves in situations of involuntary servitude including extended working hours, nonpayment of wages, restrictions on their movement by withholding of their passports or confinement to the home, and physical or sexual abuse.

The Government of India does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. India is placed on Tier 2 Watch List for the third consecutive year due to its failure to show evidence of increasing efforts to address trafficking in persons. India lacks a

national law enforcement response to any form of trafficking, but took some preliminary measures to create a central law enforcement unit to do so. However, India did not take steps to address the huge issue of bonded labor and other forms of involuntary servitude. The Indian Government also did not take meaningful steps to address its sizeable trafficking-related corruption problem.

The government drafted, but had not yet introduced to parliament, amendments to the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA) that would afford greater protection to sex trafficking victims and stricter penalties for their traffickers and for clients of prostitution. The central government also further empowered the coordination office for anti-trafficking, elevating the stature of the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) by creating a Minister of State for Women and Child Development (MWCD). India should consider designating and empowering a national law enforcement agency with investigative and prosecutorial jurisdiction throughout the country to address its interstate and international trafficking problem. The government should similarly consider taking greater measures to rescue and protect victims of bonded labor and to prosecute their traffickers or employers, giving them punishments sufficiently stringent to deter and that adequately reflect the nature of the heinous crime of trafficking. It is particularly important to strengthen and enforce sentences applied to individuals convicted of exploiting bonded laborers. India should also improve its long-term protection of trafficking victims and institute nation-wide public awareness programs to educate all segments of the population on the dangers of trafficking.

Prosecution

The Government of India over the last year sustained modest efforts to punish trafficking crimes; however, there were no significant improvements. The government's laws criminalizing labor forms of trafficking such as bonded labor or forced child labor prescribe no more than three years' imprisonment. The

government, at all relevant levels, neither vigorously investigated nor prosecuted acts of any form of trafficking found in India, nor did it report a significant number of convictions or sentences for these acts of trafficking. Moreover, there were no reports of government efforts to investigate, prosecute, convict, or sentence public officials who participated in or facilitated trafficking in persons crimes. Although India's Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA) adequately criminalizes and prescribes punishment for trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, this law was generally not used for effective prosecutions of trafficking in most of the country. The central government has moved forward, however, with amendments to the ITPA aimed at increasing penalties for repeat traffickers and clients of prostitution and eliminating provisions used to punish victims of trafficking. In 2004, the central government reported 6,341 persons convicted under the ITPA, but it did not provide data as to how many of these were convictions of women in prostitution for the offense of solicitation. The Government of India did not provide comprehensive statistics for the number of investigations, arrests, prosecutions, or convictions achieved during 2005 to punish traffickers for commercial sexual exploitation. Separately, independent sources report that the municipal government of Mumbai — India's largest city and largest concentration of victims of commercial sexual exploitation — arrested 13 suspected sex traffickers in 2005, but did not prosecute or convict any traffickers. Similarly, the city governments of Calcutta and Chennai registered 25 and 109 arrests of sex traffickers respectively, but provided no indication that these cases were ever prosecuted. The state of Maharashtra reported 82 prosecutions of trafficking offenses and the conviction of eight traffickers in 2004.

During the year, little progress was made in combating trafficking of persons for the purpose of labor exploitation. Despite estimates that millions of men, women, and children are victims of forced labor and bonded labor, the government provided no

indication that the perpetrators of these crimes were seriously punished.

The Bonded Labor Abolition Act of 1976 criminalizes the use of the bonded labor system with penalties including up to three years in jail and 2,000 rupees (\$45) in fines. International NGOs and the ILO estimate that there are 10 to 40 million bonded laborers in India; the Government of India did not provide an estimate. Moreover, it did not provide any data on prosecutions or convictions for bonded labor offenses for the reporting period. Independent sources report some prosecutions and convictions in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, with punishments limited to fines.

The Child Labor and Juvenile Justice Acts prohibit the labor exploitation of children. Under the Child Labor Act, employers are subject to imprisonment of up to one year and a fine of at least 10,000 rupees (\$227) for forced child labor. The Juvenile Justice Act mandates imprisonment of three years or less for forced or bonded labor of children. In November, the Delhi police rescued 694 children caught in forced labor in zari embroidery factories and over 16,000 children were reportedly rescued from workshops in Mumbai between June and September 2005. These local governments, however, provided no information regarding arrests or prosecutions of the factory owners exploiting these children. In the last year, the Government of India took steps to implement a nationwide police training program on trafficking. The Bureau of Police Research and Development began preparing a national anti-trafficking training module for investigative officers, and it conducted seven training workshops around the country in 2005. This nascent training program, aimed to sensitize law enforcement officers to trafficking for sexual or labor exploitation, will assist state and national level law enforcement authorities in preventing corruption and improving their capacity to combat trafficking. In addition, India should consider instituting a comprehensive database to compile state level statistics related to the rescue of victims of sex

trafficking and forced or bonded labor, as well as the arrest and prosecution of their traffickers or exploiters.

Endemic corruption among law enforcement officials impedes India's ability to effectively combat trafficking in persons. In terms of trafficking for sexual exploitation, corrupt law enforcement authorities reportedly continue to facilitate the movement of trafficking victims, protect brothels that exploit victims, and protect traffickers and brothel keepers from arrest or other threats of enforcement. In the area of bonded labor and forced child labor, some corrupt police officials continued to protect businesses and managers who rely on forced labor, and take bribes to stop enforcement or judicial action. During the reporting period, there were no reports concerning the Government of India's steps to address official complicity in trafficking in persons.

Protection

The Government of India continues to provide inadequate and uneven assistance to the vast majority of trafficking victims. Existing national programs to provide protection and rehabilitation to victims of sex trafficking, forced child labor, or bonded labor were not implemented effectively in some areas. Some of India's 28 states, however, showed resolve in addressing victims' needs. For example, the state of Tamil Nadu operates five shelters for women and girls, including victims of trafficking, and the government of Andhra Pradesh state runs six similar homes. The state government of Maharashtra is expanding the capacity of its existing Mumbai shelter. Government shelters are found in all major cities, but the quality of care they offer varies widely; allegations of victims further exploited in government shelters have been reported. The Government of India relies heavily on NGOs to provide certain services to assist victims. Child Welfare Committees operate in each district of each state to protect child victims of trafficking; they often refer such victims to local NGOs for care. The Government of India continues to

provide funding to NGOs to build shelters for victims of trafficking under its Swadhar Scheme, although some NGOs have charged that the implementation of this program has been marked by inefficiency and corruption.

Overall, protection for victims of trafficking is weak with regard to comprehensive care. Many shelters do not have the capacity to provide protection to trafficking victims for more than a few months, leaving some victims vulnerable to re-trafficking once they leave the shelters. In addition, victim witnesses rarely receive adequate protection to prevent retribution from their traffickers.

For those trafficked from other countries, repatriation assistance is sparse. Anecdotal information suggests that victims are accompanied to the border without sufficient reintegration aid, rendering them susceptible to re-trafficking. Victims of bonded labor are provided 20,000 rupees (\$450) co-funded by the national and state governments upon their rescue, but this program of rehabilitation is unevenly implemented across the country; it is unclear whether state or local governments afford other services to bonded labor victims.

The government can improve its protection efforts by instituting short- or long-term care as appropriate for trafficking victims, as well as shelter facilities to assist them. The repatriation process should be improved to ensure that victims are sufficiently reintegrated and programs to protect witnesses are established that will adequately safeguard victims from retribution. To protect Indian nationals trafficked abroad, the government should consider training overseas diplomatic officials in identifying and assisting trafficking victims caught in involuntary servitude.

Prevention

India's efforts to prevent trafficking in persons were limited this year. To address the issue of bride trafficking, the government instituted public awareness programs to educate parents on the

laws against sex-selective abortions and infanticide causing gender imbalance in parts of India and driving the demand for purchased brides. The newly created MWCD has continued the past work of the DCWD in hosting quarterly meetings with other government agencies and local NGOs to share anti-trafficking ideas and facilitate cooperation on preventing trafficking in persons. The government also aimed to prevent child labor by offering financial incentives to parents to keep their children in school.

Nevertheless, the central government was unable to guard its long, porous borders with Bangladesh and Nepal through which several thousand trafficking victims reportedly enter India each year. The government did not take adequate measures to prevent internal trafficking for sexual exploitation or involuntary servitude despite the prevalence of such trafficking to major cities, and increasingly in smaller cities and suburbs. The Government of India also did not institute a broad public awareness campaign to notify the public of the consequences of engaging in trafficking crimes. India should increase awareness of trafficking issues in rural areas where there is a high risk of trafficking. India should also better monitor its borders to interdict trafficking victims and trafficking rings. In addition, the government should also consider offering training for men and women traveling overseas for employment, to avoid situations of involuntary servitude abroad.



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*** 'Didi mujhe ghar jaana hai.....'*

'mera ladka station se ghum gaya hai.....'

*** 'Didi, I want to go home.....' the cry of a lost child*

*'My son got lost at the station, can you please help me'.....the
desperation of a mother who has lost her son.*



How many children go missing across the country each year? How many are recovered and return to their parents? Where do they go?



CHILDLINE receives such calls almost every day.

CHILDLINE centres across the country have received 66000 calls in just 3 years from 2004 to 2007. With crimes against children increasing every second, it becomes a pressing need to initiate action to protect children from going missing and track those who have gone missing. This is a call for action on all fronts for a sustainable, solution driven, long term perspective on the





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CHILDLINE India Foundation
Nana Chowk Municipal School
2nd Floor, Frere Bridge
Near Grant Road Station
Mumbai-400 007

www.childlineindia.org.in
Tel : 91 22 2387 1098/ 2388 1098
Fax : 91 22 23811098